





*Selected Poems from
The Indian Love Lyrics
of Laurence Hope.
Edited by her son
M. J. Nicolson - -*

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Laurence Hope

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*Selected Poems from
The Indian Love Lyrics
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“ LESS THAN THE DUST ”

LESS than the dust, beneath thy Chariot wheel,
Less than the rust, that never stained thy Sword,
Less than the trust thou hast in me, Oh, Lord,
Even less than these !

Less than the weed, that grows beside thy door,
Less than the speed, of hours, spent far from thee,
Less than the need thou hast in life of me.
Even less am I.

Since I, Oh, Lord, am nothing unto thee,
See here thy Sword, I make it keen and bright,
Love's last reward, Death, comes to me to-night,
Farewell, Zahir-u-din.

REQUEST

GIVE me yourself one hour ; I do not crave
For any love, or even thought, of me.
Come, as a Sultan may caress a slave
And then forget for ever, utterly.

Come ! as west winds, that passing, cool and wet,
O'er desert places, leave them fields in flower ;
And all my life, for I shall not forget,
Will keep the fragrance of that perfect hour !

STORY BY LALLA-JI, THE PRIEST

HE loved the Plant with a keen delight,
A passionate fervour, strange to see,
Tended it ardently, day and night,
Yet never a flower lit up the tree.

The leaves were succulent, thick, and green,
And, sessile, out of the snakelike stem
Rose spine-like fingers, alert and keen,
To catch at aught that molested them.

But though they nurtured it day and night,
With love and labour, the child and he
Were never granted the longed-for sight
Of a flower crowning the twisted tree.

Until one evening a wayworn Priest
Stopped for the night in the Temple shade
And shared the fare of their simple feast
Under the vines and the jasmin laid.

He, later, wandering round the flowers
Paused awhile by the blossomless tree.
The man said : " May it be fault of ours,
That never its buds my eyes may see ?

“ A slip it came from the further East
Many a sunlit summer ago.”

“ It grows in our Jungles,” said the Priest,
“ Men see it rarely; but this I know,

“ The Jungle people worship it; say
They bury a child around its roots—
Bury it living :—the only way
To crimson glory of flowers and fruits.”

He spoke in whispers; his furtive glance
Probing the depths of the garden shade.
The man came closer, with eyes askance,
The child beside them shivered, afraid.

A cold wind drifted about the three,
Jarring the spines with a hungry sound,
The spines that grew on the snakelike tree
And guarded its roots beneath the ground.

* * * * *

After the fall of the summer rain
The plant was glorious, redly gay,
Blood-red with blossom. Never again
Men saw the child in the Temple play.

THE GARDEN OF KAMA : KAMA THE INDIAN EROS

THE daylight is dying,
The Flying fox flying,
 Amber and amethyst burn in the sky.
See, the sun throws a late,
Lingering, roseate
 Kiss to the landscape to bid it good-bye.

The time of our Trysting !
Oh, come, unresisting,
 Lovely, expectant, on tentative feet.
Shadow shall cover us,
Roses bend over us,
 Making a bride chamber sacred and sweet.

We know not Life's reason,
The length of its season,
 Know not if they know, the great Ones above.
We none of us sought it,
And few could support it,
 Were it not gilt with the glamour of love.

But much is forgiven,
To Gods who have given,
 If but for an hour the Rapture of Youth.

6 THE GARDEN OF KAMA

You do not yet know it,
But Kama shall show it,
 Changing your dreams to his Exquisite Truth.

The Fireflies shall light you,
And naught shall affright you,
 Nothing shall trouble the Flight of the Hours.
Come, for I wait for you,
Night is too late for you,
 Come, when the twilight is closing the flowers.

Every breeze still is,
And, scented with lilies,
 Cooled by the twilight, refreshed by the dew,
The garden lies breathless,
Where Kama, the Deathless,
 In the hushed starlight, is waiting for you.

CAMP FOLLOWER'S SONG, GOMAL RIVER

WE have left Gul Kach behind us,
Are marching on Apozai,—
Where pleasure and rest are waiting
To welcome us by and by.

We're falling back from the Gomal,
Across the Gir-dao plain,
The camping ground is deserted,
We'll never come back again.

Along the rocks and the defiles,
The mules and the camels wind.
Good-bye to Rahimut-Ullah,
The man who is left behind.

For some we lost in the skirmish,
And some were killed in the fight.
But he was captured by fever,
In the sentry pit, at night.

A rifle shot had been swifter,
Less trouble a sabre thrust,
But his Fate decided fever,
And each man dies as he must.

8 CAMP FOLLOWER'S SONG

Behind us, red in the distance,
The wavering flames rise high,
The flames of our burning grass-huts,
Against the black of the sky.

We hear the sound of the river,
An ever-lessening moan,
The hearts of us all turn backwards
To where he is left alone.

We sing up a little louder,
We know that we feel bereft,
We're leaving the camp together,
And only one of us left.

The only one, out of many,
And each must come to his end,
I wish I could stop this singing,
He happened to be my friend.

We're falling back from the Gomal
We're marching on Apozai,
And pleasure and rest are waiting
To welcome us by and by.

Perhaps the feast will taste bitter,
The lips of the girls less kind,—
Because of Rahimut-Ullah,
The man who is left behind !

“ GOLDEN EYES ”

OH Amber Eyes, oh Golden Eyes !

Oh Eyes so softly gay !

Wherein swift fancies fall and rise,

Grow dark and fade away.

Eyes like a little limpid pool

That holds a sunset sky,

While on its surface, calm and cool,

Blue water lilies lie.

Oh Tender Eyes, oh Wistful Eyes,

You smiled on me one day,

And all my life, in glad surprise,

Leapt up and pleaded “ Stay ! ”

Alas, oh cruel, starlike eyes,

So grave and yet so gay,

You went to lighten other skies,

Smiled once and passed away.

Oh, you whom I name “ Golden Eyes,”

Perhaps I used to know

Your beauty under other skies

In lives lived long ago.

Perhaps I rowed with galley slaves,

Whose labour never ceased,

To bring across Phœnician waves

Your treasure from the East.

Maybe you were an Emperor then
And I a favourite slave;
Some youth, whom from the lions' den
You vainly tried to save !
Maybe I reigned, a mighty King,
The early nations knew,
And you were some slight captive thing,
Some maiden whom I slew.

Perhaps, adrift on desert shores
Beside some shipwrecked prow,
I gladly gave my life for yours.
Would I might give it now !
Or on some sacrificial stone
Strange Gods we satisfied,
Perhaps you stooped and left a throne
To kiss me ere I died.

Perhaps, still further back than this,
In times ere men were men,
You granted me a moment's bliss
In some dark desert den,
When, with your amber eyes alight
With iridescent flame,
And fierce desire for love's delight,
Towards my lair you came.

Ah laughing, ever-brilliant eyes,
These things men may not know,
But something in your radiance lies,
That, centuries ago,

Lit up my life in one wild blaze
 Of infinite desire
 To revel in your golden rays,
 Or in your light expire.

If this, oh Strange Ringed Eyes, be true
 That through all changing lives
 This longing love I have for you
 Eternally survives,
 May I not sometimes dare to dream
 In some far time to be
 Your softly golden eyes may gleam
 Responsively on me ?

Ah gentle, subtly changing eyes,
 You smiled on me one day,
 And all my life in glad surprise
 Leapt up, imploring “ Stay ! ”
 Alas, alas, oh Golden Eyes,
 So cruel and so gay,
 You went to shine in other skies,
 Smiled once and passed away.

TILL I WAKE

WHEN I am dying, lean over me tenderly, softly,
Stoop, as the yellow roses droop in the wind
from the South.

So I may when I wake, if there be an Awakening,
Keep, what lulled me to sleep, the touch of your
lips on my mouth.

PROTEST: BY ZAHIR-U-DIN

ALAS ! alas ! this wasted Night
With all its Jasmin-scented air,
Its thousand stars, serenely bright !
I lie alone, and long for you,
Long for your Champa-scented hair,
Your tranquil eyes of twilight hue.

Long for the close-curved, delicate lips
—Their sinuous sweetness laid on mine—
Here, where the slender fountain drips,
Here, where the yellow roses glow,
Pale in the tender silver shine
The stars across the garden throw.

Alas ! alas ! poor passionate Youth !
Why must he spend these lonely nights ?
The poets hardly speak the truth,—
Despite their praiseful litany,
His season is not all delights
Nor every night an ecstasy !

The very power and passion that make,
Might make,—his days one golden dream,
How he must suffer for their sake !
Till, in their fierce and futile rage,
The baffled senses almost deem
They might be happier in old age.

Age that can find red roses sweet,
 And yet not crave a rose-red mouth;
 Hear Bulbuls, with no wish that feet
 Of sweeter singers went his way :
 Inhale warm breezes from the South,
 Yet never feel his fancy stray.

From some near Village I can hear
 The cadenced throbbing of a drum,
 Now softly distant, now more near;
 And in an almost human fashion,
 It, plaintive, wistful, seems to come
 Laden with sighs of fitful passion.

To mock me, lying here alone
 Among the thousand useless flowers
 Upon the fountain's border stone.
 Cold stone, that chills me as I lie
 Counting the slowly passing hours
 By the white spangles in the sky.

Some feast the Tom-toms celebrate,
 Where close together, side by side,
 Gay in their gauze and tinsel state
 With lips serene and downcast eyes,
 Sit the young bridegroom and his bride,
 While round them songs and laughter rise.

They are together; Why are we
 So hopelessly, so far apart ?
 Oh, I implore you, come to me !

Come to me, Solace of mine eyes !
 Come, Consolation of my heart !
 Light of my senses ! What replies ?

A little, languid, mocking breeze
 That rustles through the Jasmin flowers
 And stirs among the Tamarind trees.
 A little gurgle of the spray
 That drips, unheard, through silent hours.
 Then breaks in sudden bubbling play.

Wind, have you never loved a rose ?
 And water, seek you not the Sea ?
 Why, therefore, mock at my repose ?
 Is it my fault I am alone
 Beneath the feathery Tamarind tree
 Whose shadows over me are thrown ?

Nay, I am mad indeed, with thirst
 For all to me this night denied
 And drunk with longing, and accurst
 Beyond all chance of sleep or rest,
 With love, unslaked, unsatisfied,
 And dreams of beauty unpossessed.

Hating the hour that brings you not,
 Mad at the space betwixt us twain,
 Sad for my empty arms, so hot
 And fevered, even the chilly stone
 Can scarcely cool their burning pain,—
 And oh, this sense of being alone !

Take hence, Oh, Night, your wasted hours,
You bring me not my Life's Delight,
My Star of Stars, my Flower of Flowers !
You leave me loveless and forlorn,
Pass on, most false and futile night,
Pass on and perish in the Dawn !

THE TEAK FOREST

WHETHER I loved you who shall say ?
Whether I drifted down your way
In the endless River of Chance and Change,
And you woke the strange
Unknown longings that have no names,
But burn us all in their hidden flames,
Who shall say ?

Life is a strange and a wayward thing :
We heard the bells of the Temples ring,
The married children, in passing, sing.
The month of marriage, the month of spring,
Was full of the breath of sunburnt flowers
That bloom in a fiercer light than ours,
And, under a sky more fiercely blue,
I came to you !

You told me tales of your vivid life
Where death was cruel and danger rife—
Of deep dark forests, of poisoned trees,
Of pains and passions that scorch and freeze,
Of southern noontides and eastern nights,
Where love grew frantic with strange delights,

While men were slaying and maidens danced,
Till I, who listened, lay still, entranced.
Then, swift as a swallow heading south,
I kissed your mouth !

One night when the plains were bathed in blood
From sunset light in a crimson flood,
We wandered under the young teak trees
Whose branches whined in the light night breeze;
You led me down to the water's brink,
" The Spring where the Panthers come to drink
At night; there is always water here
Be the season never so parched and sere."
Have we souls of beasts in the forms of men ?
I fain would have tasted your life-blood then.

The night fell swiftly; this sudden land
Can never lend us a twilight strand
'Twixt the daylight shore and the ocean night,
But takes—as it gives—at once, the light.
We laid us down on the steep hillside,
While far below us wild peacocks cried,
And we sometimes heard, in the sunburnt grass,
The stealthy steps of the Jungle pass.
We listened; knew not whether they went
On love or hunger the more intent.
And under your kisses I hardly knew
Whether I loved or hated you.

But your words were flame and your kisses fire,
And who shall resist a strong desire ?

Not I, whose life is a broken boat
On a sea of passions, adrift, afloat.
And, whether I came in love or hate,
That I came to you was written by Fate
In every hue of the blood-red sky,
In every tone of the peacocks' cry.

While every gust of the Jungle night
Was fanning the flame you had set alight.
For these things have power to stir the blood
And compel us all to their own chance mood.
And to love or not we are no more free
Than a ripple to rise and leave the sea.

We are ever and always slaves of these,
Of the suns that scorch and the winds that freeze,
Of the faint sweet scents of the sultry air,
Of the half heard howl from the far off lair.
These chance things master us ever. Compel
To the heights of Heaven, the depths of Hell.

Whether I love you? You do not ask,
Nor waste yourself on the thankless task.
I give your kisses at least return,
What matter whether they freeze or burn.
I feel the strength of your fervent arms,
What matter whether it heals or harms.

You are wise; you take what the Gods have sent.
You ask no questions, but rest content.
So I am with you to take your kiss,
And perhaps I value you more for this.

For this is Wisdom; to love, to live,
To take what Fate, or the Gods, may give,
To ask no question, to make no prayer,
To kiss the lips and caress the hair,
Speed passion's ebb as you greet its flow,—
To have,—to hold,—and,—in time,—let go !

And this is our Wisdom : we rest together
On the great lone hills in the storm-filled weather,
And watch the skies as they pale and burn,
The golden stars in their orbits turn,
While Love is with us, and Time and Peace,
And life has nothing to give but these.
But, whether you love me, who shall say,
Or whether you, drifting down my way
In the great sad River of Chance and Change,
With your looks so weary and words so strange,
Lit my soul from some hidden flame
To a passionate longing without a name,
 Who shall say ?
Not I, who am but a broken boat,
Content for awhile to drift afloat
In the little noontide of love's delights
 Between two Nights.

MALAY SONG

THE Stars await, serene and white,
The unarisen moon;
Oh, come and stay with me to-night,
Beside the salt Lagoon !

My hut is small, but as you lie,
You see the lighted shore,
And hear the rippling water sigh
Beneath the pile-raised floor.

No gift have I of jewels or flowers,
My room is poor and bare :
But all the silver sea is ours,
And all the scented air.

Blown from the mainland; where there grows
Th' " Intriguer of the Night,"
The flower that you have named Tuberose,
Sweet scented, slim, and white.

The flower that when the air is still,
And no land breezes blow,
From its pale petals can distil
A phosphorescent glow.

I see your ship at anchor ride;
Her "captive lightning" shine.
Before she takes to-morrow's tide,
Let this one night be mine !

Though in the language of your land
My words are poor and few,
Oh, read my eyes, and understand,
I give my youth to you !

VALGOVIND'S BOAT SONG

WATERS glisten and sunbeams quiver,
The wind blows fresh and free.
Take my boat to your breast, Oh, River !
Carry me out to Sea !

This land is laden with fruit and grain
With never a place left free for flowers,
A fruitful mother ; but I am fain
For brides in their early bridal hours.

Take my boat to your breast, Oh, River !
Carry me out to Sea !

The Sea, beloved by a thousand ships,
Is maiden ever, and fresh and free.
Ah, for the touch of her cool green lips,
Carry me out to Sea !

Take my boat to your breast, dear River,
And carry it out to Sea !

VALGOVIND'S SONG IN THE SPRING

THE Temple bells are ringing,
The young green corn is springing,
 And the marriage month is drawing very near.
I lie hidden in the grass,
And I count the moments pass,
 For the month of marriages is drawing near.

Soon, ah, soon, the women spread
The appointed bridal bed
 With hibiscus buds and crimson marriage
 flowers,
Where, when all the songs are done,
And the dear dark night begun,
 I shall hold her in my happy arms for hours.

She is young and very sweet,
From the silver on her feet
 To the silver and the flowers in her hair,
And her beauty makes me swoon,
As the Moghra trees at noon
 Intoxicate the hot and quivering air.

Ah, I would the hours were fleet
As her silver circled feet.

I am weary of the daytime and the night.
I am weary unto death,
Oh my rose with jasmin breath,
With this longing for your beauty and your
light.

REVERIE OF ORMUZ THE PERSIAN

SOFTLY the feathery Palm-trees fade in the violet
Distance,
Faintly the lingering light touches the edge of the
sea,
Sadly the Music of Waves, drifts, faint as an
Anthem's insistence,
Heard in the aisles of a dream, over the sandhills,
to me.

Now that the Lights are reversed, and the Singing
changed into sighing,
Now that the wings of our fierce, fugitive passion
are furled,
Take I unto myself, all alone in the light that is
dying,
Much of the sorrow that lies hid at the Heart of
the World.

Sad am I, sad for your loss : for failing the charm
of your presence,
Even the sunshine has paled, leaving the Zenith
less blue.
Even the ocean lessens the light of its green
opalescence,
Since, to my sorrow I loved, loved and grew
weary of, you,

Why was our passion so fleeting, why had the flush
of your beauty
Only so slender a spell, only so futile a power?
Yet, even thus ever is life, save when long custom
or duty
Moulds into sober fruit Love's fragile and fugitive
flower.

Fain would my soul have been faithful; never an
alien pleasure
Lured me away from the light lit in your luminous
eyes,
But ever desire of the Mind, satisfied once, and at
leisure
To criticise, balance, take counsel, assuredly dies.

All through the centuries Man has gathered his
flower, and fenced it,
—Infinite strife to attain; infinite struggle to
keep,—
Holding his treasure awhile, all Fate and all forces
against it,
Knowing it his no more, if ever his vigilance sleep.

But we have altered the World as pitiful man has
grown stronger,
So that the things we love are as easily kept as won,
Therefore the ancient fight can engage and detain
us no longer,
And all too swiftly, alas, passion is over and done.

Far too speedily now we can gather the coveted
treasure,

Enjoy it awhile, be satiated, begin to tire;

And what shall be done henceforth with the
profitless after-leisure,

Who has the breath to kindle the ash of a faded
fire ?

Ah, if it only had lasted ! After my ardent en-
deavour

Came the delirious Joy, flooding my life like a sea,
Days of delight that are burnt on the brain for
ever and ever,

Days and nights when you loved, before you grew
weary of, me.

Softly the sunset decreases dim in the violet
Distance,

Even as Love's own fervour has faded away
from me,

Leaving the weariness, the monotonous Weight
of Existence,—

All the farewells in the world weep in the sound
of the sea.

TO THE HILLS !

'Tis eight miles out, and eight miles in,
Just at the break of morn.
'Tis ice without and flame within,
To gain a kiss at dawn !

Far, where the Lilac Hills arise
Soft from the misty plain,
A lone, enchanted hollow lies
Where I at last draw rein.

Midwinter grips this lonely land,
This stony, treeless waste,
Where East, due East, across the sand,
We fly in fevered haste.

Pull up ! the East will soon be red,
The wild duck westward fly,
And make above my anxious head,
Triangles in the sky.

Like wind we go ; we both are still
So young ; all thanks to Fate !
(It cuts like knives, this air so chill,)
Dear God ! if I am late !

TO THE HILLS!

Behind us, wrapped in mist and sleep
The Ruined City lies,
(Although we race, we seem to creep !)
While lighter grow the skies.

Eight miles out only, eight miles in,
Good going all the way;
But more and more the clouds begin
To redden into day.

And every snow-tipped peak grows pink
An iridescent gem !
My heart beats quick, with joy, to think
How I am nearing them !

As mile on mile behind us falls,
Till, Oh, delight ! I see,
My Heart's Desire, who softly calls
Across the gloom to me.

The utter joy of that First Love
No later love has given,
When, while the skies grew light above,
We entered into Heaven.

HIS RUBIES: TOLD BY VALGOVIND

ALONG the hot and endless road
Calm and erect, with haggard eyes,
The prisoner bore his fetters' load
Beneath the scorching, azure skies.

Serene and tall, with brows unbent,
Without a hope, without a friend,
He, under escort, onward went,
With death to meet him at the end.

The Poppy fields were pink and gay
On either side, and in the heat
Their drowsy scent exhaled all day
A dream-like fragrance almost sweet.

And when the cool of evening fell
And tender colours touched the sky,
He still felt youth within him dwell
And half forgot he had to die.

Sometimes at night, the Camp-fires lit
And casting fitful light around,
His guard would, friend-like, let him sit
And talk awhile with them, unbound.

Thus they, the night before the last,
Were resting, when a group of girls
Across the small encampment passed,
With laughing lips and scented curls.

Then in the Prisoner's weary eyes
A sudden light lit up once more,
The women saw him with surprise,
And pity for the chains he bore.

For little women reck of Crime
If young and fair the criminal be
Here in this tropic, amorous clime
Where love is still untamed and free.

And one there was, she walked less fast
Behind the rest, perhaps beguiled
By his lithe form, who as she passed,
Waited a little while, and smiled.

The guard, in kindly Eastern fashion,
Smiled to themselves, and let her stay.
So tolerant of human passion,
"To love he has but one more day."

Yet when (the soft and scented gloom
Scarce lighted by the dying fire)
His arms caressed her youth and bloom,
With him it was not all desire.

"For me," he whispered, as he lay,
"But little life remains to live.
One thing I crave to take away :
You have the gift; but will you give ?

“ If I could know some child of mine
Would live his life, and see the sun
Across these fields of poppies shine,
What should I care that mine is done ?

“ To die would not be dying quite,
Leaving a little life behind,
You, were you kind to me to-night,
Could grant me this; but—are you kind ?

“ See, I have something here for you
For you and It, if It there be.”

Soft in the gloom her glances grew,
With gentle tears he could not see.

He took the chain from off his neck,
Hid in the silver charm there lay
Three rubies, without flaw or fleck.
She answered softly, “ I will stay.”

He drew her close; the moonless skies
Shed little light; the fire was dead.
Soft pity filled her youthful eyes,
And many tender things she said.

Throughout the hot and silent night
All that he asked of her she gave.
And, left alone ere morning light,
He went serenely to the grave,

Happy; for even when the rope
Confined his neck, his thoughts were free,
And centred round his Secret Hope
The little life that was to be.

When Poppies bloomed again, she bore
His child who gaily laughed and crowed,
While round his tiny neck he wore
The rubies given on the road.

For his small sake she wished to wait,
But vainly to forget she tried,
And grieving for the Prisoner's fate,
She broke her gentle heart and died.

STORY OF UDAIPORE: TOLD BY
LALLA-JI, THE PRIEST

“AND when the Summer Heat is great,
And every hour intense,
The Moghra, with its subtle flowers,
Intoxicates the sense.”

The Coco palms stood tall and slim, against the
golden glow,
And all their grey and graceful plumes were
waving to and fro.

She lay forgetful in the boat, and watched the
dying Sun
Sink slowly lakewards, while the stars replaced
him, one by one.

She saw the marble Temple walls long white
reflections make,
The echoes of their silver bells were blown across
the lake.

The evening air was very sweet; from off the
island bowers
Came scents of Moghra trees in bloom, and
Oleander flowers.

“ The Moghra flowers that smell so sweet
When love's young fancies play;
The acrid Moghra flowers, still sweet
Though love be burnt away.”

The boat went drifting, uncontrolled, the rower
rowed no more,
But deftly turned the slender prow towards the
further shore.

The dying sunset touched with gold the Jasmin
in his hair;
His eyes were darkly luminous : she looked and
found him fair.

And so persuasively he spoke, she could not say
him nay,
And when his young hands took her own, she
smiled and let them stay.

And all the youth awake in him, all love of Love
in her,
All scents of white and subtle flowers that filled
the twilight air

Combined together with the night in kind con-
spiracy
To do Love service, while the boat went drifting
onwards, free.

“ The Moghra flowers, the Moghra flowers,
While Youth’s quick pulses play
They are so sweet, they still are sweet,
Though passion burns away.”

Low in the boat the lovers lay, and from his sable
curls

The Jasmin flowers slipped away to rest among
the girl’s.

Oh, silver lake and silver night and tender silver sky !
Where as the hours passed, the moon rose white
and cold on high.

“ The Moghra flowers, the Moghra flowers,
So dear to Youth at play ;
The small and subtle Moghra flowers
That only last a day.”

Suddenly, frightened, she awoke, and waking
vaguely saw

The boat had stranded in the sedge that fringed
the further shore.

The breeze grown chilly, swayed the palms; she
heard, still half awake,
A prowling jackal’s hungry cry blown faintly o’er
the lake.

She shivered, but she turned to kiss his soft,
remembered face,
Lit by the pallid light he lay, in Youth’s aban-
doned grace.

But as her lips met his she paused, in terror and
dismay,

The white moon showed her by her side asleep a
Leper lay.

“ Ah Moghra flowers, white Moghra flowers,
All love is blind, they say;
The Moghra flowers, so sweet, so sweet,
Though love be burnt away ! ”

VERSES : FAIZ ULLA

JUST in the hush before the dawn
A little wistful wind is born.
A little chilly errant breeze,
That thrills the grasses, stirs the trees.
And, as it wanders on its way,
While yet the night is cool and dark,
Ere the first carol of the lark,—
Its plaintive murmurs seem to say
“ I wait the sorrows of the day.”

AFRIDI LOVE

SINCE, Oh, Beloved, you are not even faithful
To me, who loved you so, for one short night,
For one brief space of darkness, though my
absence

Did but endure until the dawning light.

Since all your beauty—which was *mine*—you
squandered

On *that* which now lies dead across your door;
See here this knife, made keen and bright to kill
you.

You shall not see the sun rise any more.

Lie still ! Lie still ! In all the empty village

Who is there left to hear or heed your cry ?

All are gone down to labour in the valley,

Who will return before your time to die ?

No use to struggle ; when I found you sleeping,

I took your hands and bound them to your side,

And both these slender feet, too apt at straying,

Down to the cot on which you lie are tied.

Lie still, Beloved ; that dead thing lying yonder,

I hated and I killed, but love is sweet,

And you are more than sweet to me, who love you,

Who decked my eyes with dust from off your
feet.

Give me your lips; Ah, lovely and disloyal
Give me yourself again; before you go
Down through the darkness of the Great, Blind
Portal,
All of life's best and basest you must know.

Erstwhile Beloved, you were so young and fragile
I held you gently, as one holds a flower :
But now, God knows, what use to still be tender
To one whose life is done within an hour ?

I hurt ? What then ? Death will not hurt you
dearest,
As you hurt me, just for a single night,
You call me cruel, who laid my life in ruins
To gain one little moment of delight.

Look up, look out, across the open doorway
The sunlight streams. The distant hills are
blue.

Look at the pale, pink peach trees in our garden,
Sweet fruit will come of them;—but not for you.

The fair, far snow, upon those jagged mountains
That gnaw against the hard blue Afghan sky
Will soon descend, set free by summer sunshine.
You will not see those torrents sweeping by.

The world is not for you. From this day forward,
You must lie still alone; who would not lie
Alone for one night only, though returning
I was, when earliest dawn should break the sky.

There lies my lute, and many strings are broken,
Some one was playing it, and some one tore
The silken tassels round my Hookah woven;
Some one who plays and smokes, and loves, no
more !

Some one who took last night his fill of pleasure,
As I took mine at dawn ! The knife went home
Straight through his heart ! God only knows my
rapture

Bathing my chill hands in the warm red foam.

And so I pain you ? This is only loving,
Wait till I kill you ! Ah, this soft, curled hair !
Surely the fault was mine, to love and leave you
Even a single night, you are so fair.

Cold steel is very cooling to the fervour
Of over passionate ones, Beloved, like you.
Nay, turn your lips to mine. Not quite unlovely
They are as yet, as yet, though quite untrue.

What will your brother say, to-night returning
With laden camels homewards to the hills,
Finding you dead, and me asleep beside you,
Will he awake me first before he kills ?

For I shall sleep. Here on the cot beside you
When you, my Heart's Delight, are cold in
death.

When your young heart and restless lips are
silent,
Grown chilly, even beneath my burning breath.

When I have slowly drawn my knife across you,
Taking my pleasure as I see you swoon,
I shall sleep sound, worn out by love's last fervour,
And then, God grant your kinsmen kill me
soon !

STARLIGHT

OH, beautiful Stars, when you see me go
Hither and thither, in search of love,
Do you think me faithless, who gleam and glow
Serene and fixed in the blue above ?
Oh, Stars, so golden, it is not so.

But there is a garden I dare not see,
There is a place where I fear to go,
Since the charm and glory of life to me
The brown earth covered there, long ago.
Oh, Stars, you saw it, you know, you know.

Hither and thither I wandering go,
With aimless haste and wearying fret;
In a search for pleasure and love ? Not so,
Seeking desperately to forget.
You see so many, Oh, Stars, you know.

KASHMIRI SONG

PALE hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath your
spell!

Whom do you lead on Rapture's roadway, far,
Before you agonise them in farewell?

Oh, pale dispensers of my Joys and Pains,
Holding the doors of Heaven and of Hell,
How the hot blood rushed wildly through the
veins

Beneath your touch, until you waved farewell.

Pale hands, pink tipped, like Lotus buds that float
On those cool waters where we used to dwell,
I would have rather felt you round my throat
Crushing out life; than waving me farewell!

THE PURPLE DUSK

SINCE the white day must dawn again so soon,
And early love is diffident and shy,
Oh, charitable clouds conceal the moon
Grant the indulgence of an unstarred sky !

Ah, silver surf, abreak along the shore,
Cease for awhile thy restless ebb and flow.
The silence trembles with thy sullen roar
And the soft voice I love is very low.

Wind of the Desert, leave the Orange flowers
To spill their sweetness over sand and sea,
Come, all unperfumed, to this couch of ours;
Blow through his curls and bring their scent
to me.

Ah, Time, who brought this treasure to my breast,
Knowing so well that cruelty of thine,
I would die now, and leave thee at thy best,
Ere thou hast torn my lover's lips from mine.

THE HOSPITAL ON THE SHORE

THE youthful swimmers come up on the beach,
Naked and fresh from the kiss of the sea,
I hear the sound of their light-hearted speech
As it is with them, it was once with me !
Oh, Death, grant me pity : just one day
more,
And let me go down again to the shore.

I could have died in the rush of the air,
Mid crashing water and petulant spray,
The surf in my teeth, the wind in my hair,
Rejoicing, exultant, even as they.
But to meet Death here, . . . in this
walled-in cage,
I am dumb with terror and blind with rage.

Have pity ! Reprieve me ! just one more ride,
White sand beneath us, white planets above,
One last long sail with the ebb of the tide,
One lilac evening of delicate love.
One lingering look at those eyes of his.
To remember through the Eternities.

INVITATION TO THE JUNGLE

THE Jungle gloom is dim and cool,
And, even through the noonday heat,
Among the reeds beside the pool
The silent air is freshly sweet.

Though desert winds, sand-laden, pass,
And all the tree-tops bend and sigh,
No breezes stir the flower-filled grass
Beside the lake where we shall lie.

We shall not hear the Temple bells,
The tom-tom's sad insistent beat,
The far Bazaar, whose murmur swells
With eager cries and restless feet.

We shall not know the myriad cares
That make the Home's soft tyranny,
And all the Temple's lip-worn prayers,
Its ordered gifts, will pass us by.

Those lip-worn prayers; whose sense is lost
Effaced by long and tearful use,
By thousands daily skywards tost,
While still the God's reject,—refuse,—

Let others pay the reverence due
 With waving lights and sacred flowers.
 I pray no more except to you,
 My faith is in this love of ours.

And I shall twine the Kuskus grass
 To shield the thing I hold so dear.
 What if the fierce-eyed Panthers pass ?
 I know their ways and have no fear.

The jungle is my native land
 And love shall smooth its paths for you :
 Ah, could I make you understand,
 How well it is, this thing you do.

You leave the world, and passing by
 Its tarnished gold and futile strife,
 Gain freedom, love, the open sky,
 The flowers upon the Tree of Life !

STARS OF THE DESERT

(Mahomed Akram's Night Watch)

THE night is calm, and all the stars are burning,
Around our camp the sands stretch far away,
No sound, except the lonely jackals howling,
Until the horses, startled, wake and neigh.

Only the walls of one thin tent of canvas,
Only a yard of yellow desert sand,
Between us two, and yet I know you distant,
As though you lived in some far Northern land.

Here, at the doorway of my tent, I linger
To watch in yours the shadow and the light,
The hungry soul within me burning, burning,
As the stars burn throughout the Eastern night.

I know well how you sleep, your head thrown
backwards,
Your loose hair ruffled up and disarrayed,
Your fervent eyes still sombre in their slumber
From the dark circle of the lashes' shade.

I listen to your even cadenced breathing,
From the soft curve of parted lips set free;
Only a slender wall of wind-stirred canvas
Between your loveliness asleep and me.

Sleep on, I sit and watch your tent in silence,
White as a sail upon this sandy sea,
And know the Desert's self is not more boundless
Than is the distance 'twixt yourself and me.

Know that I am some low red planet burning.
You in the Zenith, a serene white star,
And I to you, less than the lonely jackals
That howl among the sandy wastes afar.

Sleep on, the Desert sleeps around you, quiet,
Watched by the restless, golden stars above,
Ay, let us sleep; you to your careless waking,
I, with my dreams of unrequited love.

DROIT DU SEIGNEUR

THE Aspens shiver by the osier bed,
The waters ripple in September's sun
Among the rushes, where I sit and dream
My basket empty and my work undone.

I watch the spirals of blue smoke arise
Above the green of oak and chestnut tree
Only one week of wistful weariness
Before as custom bids, I go to thee.

But, wilt thou take thy right? My brother's wife
Went to the castle on her wedding-day,
And when thou saw'st her shivering dissent
Didst thou not say in kindness, "Go thy way,

"Untouched by me, even as thou hast come,
Save in the way of gifts; take this and this?"
And she, poor little fool, rejoined her mate,
Unharm'd, *unhonoured*, even by a kiss.

Last week I saw her at her cottage door
Nursing her clumsy child; no wistful sigh
For what her peasant arms might yet have held,
A child of thine,—broke her serenity.

Ah, if I knew how thou wilt deal with me.

Who knows ? who knows ? They tell me I am
fair,

And any beauty that I may possess

Have I not kept it for thy sake with care ?

To guard a pallor that might blush for thee,

Shading the sunrays from this face of mine,

Smoothing my hands with milk from elder-flowers

Lest the rough skin should jar the silk of thine.

Ah, how I loved thee, even as a child

Watching thee ride across the village square,

The curls blown backwards from thy vivid face

Thy pennons lifted on the summer air.

How I have envied brides who passed thy gates,

And when I heard the village gossips say

Thou wert not as thy fathers ; oft refused

To claim thy privilege, I turned away

So glad and yet so sad,—it well may be

They will not notice me, those eyes of thine ;

Yet surely love will find some soft appeal

To draw their gaze to me, thy lips to mine.

My cousin loves me ; in his kindly eyes

Lies the clear promise of a calm content.

I, wedding him, ensure his happiness

As thou ensures mine, shouldst thou consent.

Ah, if thou shouldst be kind and set thy seal

On me and mine for ever. Women know

The secret ways of love and all its lore

If,—Ah, dear God in Heaven, if this were so !

My firstborn should be thine, then all my life

Will, and must, keep the memory of thee.

Even as thou art printed on my heart,

So on my being must thy impress be.

No second lover and no second child

Efface the imprint of the first who came,

And on the golden sands of youth inscribed

Lightly, but so indelibly, his name.

Many a custom, many an old abuse

Thy people cherish still, unknown to thee ;

My cousin whispers me among the reeds,

“ What has the priest to do with thee and me ?

“ Let us forestall our marriage, thus thy child

Will be thy husband's, not a lawless thing

Born of injustice.” Ah, how blind men are,

How strange their words of careless kindness ring.

It is the sweetest justice of our lives

That once, ere settling to our lifelong task

Of serving boors and raising sons to them

One golden moment, too divine to ask

In our most daring prayers, is flung to us

By our time honoured custom's strange decree,

One perfect hour of radiant romance

Is lent to us ; will it be lent to me ?

Rarely men understand our way of love;
How that to women in their wedding hours
Lover and priest and king are blent in one,
Hence the awed worship of these hearts of ours.
At times love for a little lifts the veil
And men and women see each other's heart,
But swiftly passion comes, obscuring all,
And thus the nearing souls are swept apart.
To us love is a sacred rite; to men
Custom, perhaps affection, or desire.
Before we hold our lovers in our arms
They are too fiercely amorous to inquire.
And after too indifferent; thus our souls
Remain an unread chapter to the end,
And those whose very life is blent with ours
Cannot be called with justice even friend.
Ah me, I dream and dream : my basket lies
Unfilled beside me, while the aspens part
Their trembling leaves, and show the castle walls
That rest my eyes and draw my anxious heart,
Because they hold its treasure. Ah, Seigneur,
So loved, so longed for, passing strange it seems
That I shall speak to thee, to whom I speak
Daily in thought, and nightly through my dreams.
Thou may'st misunderstand. Excess of love
Takes the pale lips of coldness or of art.
And yet my eyes must surely find some way
To show the white heat burning at my heart !

Seigneur, not so dissimilar am I

From thee and thine. Thou know'st thy father's
ways,

Ay, and his father's; much the castle blood

Mixed with the village stream in former days.

Signs of more brilliant lineage than my own

Many have marked in me. Take heed of this;

Find me not too unworthy of thine arms;

These lips are thine knowing no other kiss.

Think; if thou givest me an hour's delight

It will be all my life will ever know.

Seigneur, have pity on this love of mine

And lend thyself to me before I go

Back to my narrow life. The whitest star

May let its pure and trembling beauty rest

In the dim silver of the smallest pool;

Wherefore not thou a moment on my breast?

I am thine own by immemorial right,

Stoop thou and take that privilege of thine;

An hour's dalliance in thy life, Seigneur,

And an eternal memory in mine!

ISTAR-I-SAHARA

DIM in the east the ruined city lies,
Purple, against the paler purple skies,
And slender palms and minarets arise,
 Into the night.

The sands are soft; by desert winds caressed
Into a thousand ripples. Let us rest
And watch the flaming scarlet of the west
 Fade into night.

The pale pink Persian rose is like thy mouth,
Thy breath is sweet as breezes from the south
To weary lands repining in the drouth
 Long days and nights.

I too have waited, parched and worn with pain,
Come and refresh me, as the gracious rain
Falls on tired fields and makes them green again
 Through summer nights.

Ah, how I love thee. Thou art very fair,
Witness the silken softness of thy hair,
And thy calm eyes, clear as the morning air
 On mountain heights.

Gloom falls apace, and silence spreads afar,
Give me thy hands, how slim and cool they are.
Lives there such love on any other star
 That shines to-night ?

Ah, wait awhile, as yet I only care
To lie to leeward and drink in the air
That passes over thee and through thy hair
Bringing delight.

Withdraw thy lips from mine, Insatiate !
Ah, give me time Beloved—thou wilt not wait ?
Then,—as thou wilt, how shall I strive with fate
This night of nights ?

Star of the Desert, make me thine indeed,
Though thou shouldst slay me now, I should not
heed.

Of future days and nights I have no need
After this night.

My lips live only when they cling to thine,
Part them a little as they close on mine,
So I may crush the grape and drink the wine
Of my delight.

If thou hast hurt me ? Ah, how should I know ?
If this be pain, then always pain me so !
Nay, do not stir, I cannot let thee go
This night of nights !

Justly I worship thee ! Thou art divine
Creating thus thy life anew in mine.
Istar-Sahar ! give me a child of thine
This night of nights !

TWILIGHT

COME to me with the earliest star,
Thou shalt not be caressed,
For passion and love shall stand afar
That I may give thee rest.
Tell of thy troubles before we sleep
Of all thy hopes and fears,
And if the telling should make thee weep
Then I will drink thy tears.

The shade shall solace thy soul that grieves,
And I shall shield thine eyes,
With glossy fans of magnolia leaves,
From starlight in the skies,
While all the cares of the angry hosts
That stalk thy soul by day
Between the trees, like wandering ghosts,
Shall softly steal away.

Where shouldst thou slumber, if not with me ?
Thy haven is my breast,
I stretch myself as a couch for thee,
To lull thy limbs to rest.
But, Oh, I promise, Lover of mine,
By all the stars above
I will not offer my lips to thine,
Nor weary thee with love !

OH, LIFE, I HAVE TAKEN YOU FOR MY LOVER !

(To Arthur E. J. Legge, who suggested this idea)

OH, Life, I have taken you for my Lover,
I rent your veils and I found you fair;
If a fault or failing my eyes discover,
I will not see it; it is not there !

I know, *if I knew*, I should hold you dearer,
Should understand, *if I understood*,
For I worship more, as you draw me nearer,
Your reckless Evil, your perfect Good.

In the Jungle gloom, we have watched and waited,
For stealthy Panthers, that prowl by night,
At the end of some weary march, belated,
We heard strange tales by the camp-fire light.

We have lain on the starlit sands, untented,
While low-hung planets rose white and fair,
And in moonlit gardens, silver and scented,
Oh, Life, my Lover, how sweet you were !

Forbidden and barbarous rites were shown us,
In rock-hewn Temples and jungle caves,
And the smoke-wreathed home of the dead has
known us,—

The burning-ghat by the Ganges waves.

Ah, the long, lone ride through the starlit hours,
The long, lone watch on the starlit sea,
And the flame and flush of the morning flowers
When Life, my Lover, was kind to me !

Betimes we were out on the Sea, together ;
The vessel raced down the great green slope
Of mountainous waves, in desperate weather ;
The hearts of men were adrift from hope.

As over the deck, in exultant fashion,
The violent water crashed and fell,
I knew, through the joy of your reckless passion,
Agonised fear of the last farewell.

But I follow you always, unresisting,
To lowest depth ; to uttermost brink,
From a thirst like mine there is no desisting
Though given poison for wine to drink.

You may do your utmost, you will not shake me,
Your faith may falter ; my faith is true.
Oh, Life, you may shatter and rend and break me,
All Pain is Pleasure, that springs from you !

In the height and heat of your wildest passion,
You had your uttermost will of me,
And when have I asked for the least compassion ?
A lover loved is a lover free !

Though, with never a word of farewell spoken
In lonely wilds of some Desert place,
You have flung me from you, adrift and broken
To wait the child of your last embrace.

And never my faith nor my fervour faltered,
Until you turned to my lips again,
When, my eager longing for you unaltered,
Your first kiss cancelled my months of pain.

Ah, Life, you may torture my soul, betray me,
The right is yours, as Lover and Lord.
And when in the climax of all, you slay me,
My lips in dying will seek your sword.

TREES OF WHARNCLIFFE HOUSE

OH, green and leafy Wharncliffe trees
That tremble to and fro,
You rustle in the languid breeze
And catch the evening glow.
Across the dusty gloomy street,
I note your tender sheen,
But unto me it is not sweet,
Who see what I have seen.

The slender Coco palms I crave
Beside a purple sea,
Where every phosphorescent wave
Leaps up in ecstasy,
Towards the tangled stars above
That sparkle in the blue,
These are the things I know and love.
How can I care for you ?

I always feel a sense of loss
If, at the close of day,
I cannot see the Southern Cross
Break through the gathered grey,
Nor watch the liquid moonlight gleam
Among the temples white,
And realise that lovely dream,
We call an Eastern night.

Though I, impatient of the heat,
Forth from the window lean
To cool my sight across the street
Amidst your shaded green,
Your leaves, refreshed by summer showers,
Are naught to me, who feast
My fancy on those other flowers
That burn about the East.

For I have seen the Lotus bloom
On lakes like inland seas,
And white Magnolias, through the gloom,
Moonlike among the trees.
Have watched the pale Tuberose, aglow
With phosphorescent light,
And Water-lilies lying low
On sacred tanks at night.

Have wandered where the Moghra flowers
Exhale their scent at noon,
And dreamt sweet dreams where Jasmin bowers
Grow white beneath the moon.
Have seen the Poppies' crimson wave
O'erflow the land for miles
And Roses, on an Eastern grave
Turn even Death to smiles.

By night, my fancy spreads her wings
In visions that console,
But all day long, remembered things
Are dragging at my soul.

I want the silver on the sea,
The surf along the shore,
The ruined Mosque, whose weeds grow free,
Where Princes prayed of yore.

I want the lonely, level sands
Stretched out beneath the sun,
The sadness of the old, old lands,
Whose destiny is done,
The glory and the grace, that cling
About the mountain crest
Where tombs of many a faithless king
Guard, faithfully, their rest.

Not lightly would I speak of Love,
Or estimate his power,
But every star that wheels above,
And each enamelled flower
That sends persuasive influence
To touch the human mind,
Appeals to some strange, inner sense
That Love can never find.

Love always needs his ally, Youth,
Or lost is all his charm;
A sunset is a golden truth
Nor age nor ill can harm.
And loveliness will lend the earth
Its radiance and sheen
If but one rosebud come to birth,
One single leaf grow green.

Ah, waving trees of Wharncliffe House,
That tremble to and fro,
Old dreams and fancies you arouse,
Old fires you set aglow.
Your shaded greenness soothes the eye,
Worn out with dusty hours,
But still I crave that Eastern sky,
Those brilliant Orient flowers !

ALL FAREWELLS SHOULD BE
GENTLY SPOKEN

Ay, smooth your hair for another lover,
Refold the satin, restring the pearls,
Lest those who will take my place discover
Discoloured tints and dishevelled curls.

Lift up those delicate lips that mine
Reddened with kisses but yesterday,
Let others drink the dregs of the wine
We two have tasted and flung away.

I wish you well; go gather the gold,
The little triumphs you hold so dear,
For you the pasture, the sheltered fold :
Ways smoothed by custom and fenced by fear.

You could not have lived aloof, afar
In golden deserts, by lonely streams,
Be rich, be courted, be all you are,
But seek not silence, nor love nor dreams.

Yet what am I that my song should shame you,
What strength have I, that I call you weak ?
Ah, Love alone has the right to blame you
And He is a God and will not speak.

One thing there is yet to be glad of; Fate
 In making us one has not left us three.
No child shall inherit our love's estate
 To be false like you or forlorn like me.

What if your sweet and treacherous eyes
 Had smiled at me from a child of mine
Your delicate lips, so apt at lies,
 Lived and laughed, a perpetual sign.

Of fitful passion and frenzied hours
 That now are utterly passed away,
Dead and forgotten as last year's flowers
 And all sweet things that have had their day.

Yet, last farewells should be gently spoken,
 And times of pleasure let no man grudge.
Of things once loved, though his heart be broken,
 A lover has never the right to judge.

THE FISHERMAN'S BRIDE

THE great grey waves, with an angry moan,
Rush in on the patient sand.

The spray from their crests is backwards blown
By the strong wind from the land.

As curls are blown from a maiden's face
And flutter behind her free,

The spindrift blows from the waves that race
From stress of the outer sea.

The restless wind has ever a sigh
And the waves are salt as tears,
Maybe because of the dead who lie
Where never the sunlight peers.

One curl of his hair is more to me
Than a thousand waves of thine,
Yet is his life in thy charge, oh, sea,
And also and therefore mine.

Great sins are written against thy name
In records of olden times.

Art thou not filled with sorrow and shame
Remembering ancient crimes ?

Then spare, oh, spare this lover of mine,
Thou queen of a million ships,
Content thee with that coral of thine
And leave me my lover's lips !

THE CITY : SONG OF MAHOMED AKRAM

SINNING, and sinned against, the City lay,
Burnt by the sun's caresses day by day,
Passive, defenceless, with her latest breath
Conceiving at his pleasure plague and death.

Relentlessly he poured his ardent rays
Into her cloistered courts and secret ways,
While the hot gold he spilt upon the plain
Rose from the furnace of the sands again.

Beneath a sullen sunset, dimly red,
Rent by the lamentations for the dead,
Whose burning-ghats defiled the stagnant air,
The breathless city waited in despair.

Then came the flutter of a sudden breeze,
Fragrant with scents of aromatic trees,
Cool with the magic freshness of the sea,
And the dry maize-leaves shivered restlessly.

The wind went onwards, to the outer gate,
Thrilled with soft pity for the City's fate,
Dispensing coolness, passed the inner wall,
And fanned the lips of those about to fall.

Swept in his freshness through the stifling lane,
Flew through low casements, fluttered forth again,
Winnowed the market-place, whose floor was red,
And lightly smoothed the cereclothes of the dead.

Stole through the women's chambers, close and
sweet,

Lifted their clinging silks from face to feet,
Cooled the pale brows that glimmered in the dusk,
Then gained the open faintly tinged with musk.

Entered the prison, soothed the ring-worn wrist,
The deeper wounds of fettered ankles kissed,
Giving the only freedom that was craved;
Freedom from heat. Thus was the City saved.

His coolness left her fresh as any flower,
And to restrict the sun's relentless power,
He veiled her with soft clouds and bid them stay
Till all the heat-wrought ill should pass away.

I would have asked such aid of thee, had I but
dared;

Thou couldst have done as much for me, hadst
thou but cared.

RABAT : MOROCCO

OH, walled, white City, rising from the plain,
Between the grey-green grass, the grey-blue
skies,

How we have longed for you, and watched in vain
Till your pale beauty rose upon our eyes.

From Orange groves, beyond your gated walls,
Faint scents of Citron bloom float far away.
Upon each wind-worn face the perfume falls
Till we forget the journey of the day.

Forget the weary march, its dust and heat,
The frequent carrion that taints the air,
The three-inch spur, the lame and stumbling feet,
The pointed stirrup, clogged with blood and
hair.

Forget the wretched brute, that strains and strives,
Staggered a few more paces with his load
Then falls and dies, beneath the open knives,
The kicks and curses of the savage road.

Let us forget (in such forgetfulness
Lies the one chance, perhaps, of life at all !)
While our burnt lips receive the soft caress
Exhaled from Orange flowers beyond the wall.

Ah, sea-set City, grant my heart's request !

Where your slim minarets soar white above
Your fragrant Orange gardens, grant me rest,
And from some child of yours, a little love.

Ah, walled, white City, grant me a little love !

TO AZIZ : SONG OF MAHOMED
AKRAM

YOUR beauty puts a barb into my soul,
Strive as I will it never lets me go.
My love has passed the frontiers of control,
You are so fair and I desire you so.

Others may come and go, they are to me
But changing mirage, transient, untrue,
My faithlessness is but fidelity
Since I am never faithful, but to you.

You are not kind to me, but many are
And all their kindness does not make them
dear;

It may be you deceive me when afar
Even as always you torment me near.

Yet is your beauty so divine a thing,
So irreplaceable, so haunting sweet
Against all reason, I am fain to fling
My life, my youth, myself, beneath your feet.

DEVOTION OF AZIZ TO MIR KHAN

MIR KHAN

“ AND now, Aziz, I take my leave of thee.”

AZIZ

“ Farewell, Mir Khan.”

MIR KHAN

“ Hast thou no more to say ? ”

AZIZ

“ I, saying farewell to thee, take leave of all.”

MIR KHAN

“ Thou knowest, Aziz, I shall return to thee.
I do but leave thee now, at thy command.”

AZIZ

“ Ay, at my prayer.”

MIR KHAN

“ Indeed I shall return
Ere the fifth sunset gild these barren hills.
I would have stayed with thee; have stayed alone,
Did I not feel the truth of all thy words,
How that my name entails a greater risk
Than thine my foster-brother, yet I go
Somewhat in doubt——”

AZIZ

“ I have no doubt at all.
Only go quickly, lest my heart should break ! ”

MIR KHAN

“ See, now, Aziz, it is but as thou sayest,
If I should stay, they will imprison me,
And hold me long, knowing my father's name
Makes me a hostage, worthy to be held,
Whilst thee they will not——”

AZIZ

“ Me they will not hold.”

MIR KHAN

“ What dost thou murmur ? ”

AZIZ

“ Nothing. Go, Mir Khan.
The last faint light has left the lilac hills,
And thou shouldst start. Even disguised as now
In the disfiguring raiment of a slave,
Thy beauty shines like evening stars, ablaze
Through dusky mists that but enhance their glow.
Walk warily, Mir Khan, and hide thine eyes,
Lest women see, and passion shipwreck thee
Ere thou hast reached thy fort——”

MIR KHAN

“ Whence I return
With a picked squadron to deliver thee.”

AZIZ

“ Why dost thou hesitate ? ”

MIR KHAN

“ Farewells are sad,
And—there is something in thine eyes, Aziz,
Dost thou ?—thou canst not—doubt of my re-
turn ? ”

AZIZ

“ I doubt thee not, Mir Khan. Another star
Has risen above the purple mountain crest,
Thou shouldst be gone.”

MIR KHAN

“ Believe me——”

AZIZ

“ I believe.

Indeed I know. Thine inmost secret thoughts
Are mine, were always mine. Ah, try me not,
Leave me, whilst I can bid thee leave me. Go,
Lest I implore thee, ‘ Stay and die with me ! ’ ”

MIR KHAN

“ Die ? But thou diest not ! I had not changed
My state and garments with thee, had a thought
Of death to thee, or even the chance of death,
Glanced on my mind. Nay, then, I stay, Aziz.”

AZIZ

“ There is no risk. Thou art so much to me
Even a five days’ parting moves me so,—
Breaks up my courage, till I hardly heed
What words I say. Go now. Thou art Aziz,
Aziz, the slave, remember, not Mir Khan,
Beloved of women, and ever in their snares,
Even as now.”

MIR KHAN

“ Take thou my opium.”

AZIZ

“ Nay, thou wilt need it in the mountain pass;
I have my own.”

MIR KHAN

“ Thine own was given to me
Long since thou knowest.”

AZIZ

“ I tell thee I want it not ! ”

MIR KHAN

“ Well, as thou wilt, Aziz, farewell.”

AZIZ

“ Farewell.”

.

AZIZ

“ Ah, thou art gone indeed. Mir Khan, Mir Khan,

Return to me, return ! I am lost ! I am dead !
Is that the sound of his returning feet ?

Nay, it is but a stone, his horse's hoof
Sets leaping down the hillside. Oh, Mir Khan,
Thou art gone from me, and my life is gone with
thee !

“ Ay, thou hast gone, and left me to my fate,
Knowing I knew thou knewest. For thou didst
know.

Last midnight, when Sher Afzul came to me
And told me the Shah-Zada had decreed
That thou shouldst die, for that light love of thine
Amongst his women, also he made known
Thou hadst arranged to change with me, to say
' Stay thou Aziz, while I, Mir Khan, return
To bring thee speedy succour from the fort.
And if they find that thou art but Aziz,
Aziz, the slave, and not the lord Mir Khan,
They will not wrong thee, will not torture thee
As they would torture me, the son of kings.'

“ Further, Sher Afzul said thou, smiling, spak'st
Saying, ' He loves me so, he will remain,
Even with certain death confronting him.'

“ Ay, but thou knew’st me well. He *will* remain !
There was no need of any speech of thine
To bid me stay. Am I not thine indeed
For life or death ? Oh, I am glad, Mir Khan !
Glad that thou givest me this exquisite gift
Even the gift of death,—death for thy sake.

“ Thy beauty was ever a perfect thing to me,
Gracious and free; to see thy luminous eyes
Lit with the longing of thine ardent soul,
Ablaze, like golden suns, in love or war,
To touch thy feet, setting thy stirrup-irons,
Or rest my lips upon thy drinking-cup,
These were the joys of Aziz, serving thee,
Living unnoticed with thee, in thy tents.

“ Women have loved me, even me, Mir Khan,
Not with the adoration given to thee,
But with kind words, and gentle ways, that fell
On my worn heart as rain on dusty flowers,—
Perhaps it was pity, not love; I do not know.
But this devotion that I have for thee,
This is another thing; I have no words
To tell thee what thou knewest and didst not heed.
Why shouldst thou heed ? What could I do for thee,
To whom the whole world is willing to give its all,
Holding that all less than the sight of thee ?

“ When at to-morrow’s dawn they torture me,
Burning my eyes, I shall remember thine,
The luminous circles of light I so adored.

And when they crush my limbs, I shall find peace
Knowing that thine, safe in the distant fort,
Amongst thy household rest in licit love.

“ How I have envied them the things they did !
The women who loved thee, and were loved by
thee.

Envied their jewelled hands the right to play
In that soft hair of thine, their little teeth
The law they allowed themselves to cling and bite
Thy rounded shoulder, I, who was naught to thee,
Set to prepare the couch, to smooth the quilt——

“ Once I remember, crouched against thy tent,
I sought for warmth (thou wouldst have pardoned
me

So cold it was that night) and heard her speak,—
Her, who beside thee, tranced in pleasure, lay,
Saying, ‘ It is not for thy beauty’s sake
That I desire thee so, but for thy fame,
Sweeping aside thine enemies, as leaves
Are blown by autumn gusts,’ and thy reply
Was ‘ Ah, Delight, art thou so sure of this ?
Wouldst thou have sought and loved me had I
been

Ill-favoured, say, as my poor slave, Aziz ? ’

“ Ah, poor indeed ! I heard nor cared no more,
Shivering in my furs upon the snow,
Not from the cold, but from the icy pangs
Of pain that will be with me till I die.

Truly, to-morrow's torments will not be
Crueller than these memories of mine.
The heated irons, the flesh-dividing steel,
Are they not gifts from thee, my well-beloved ?

“ Ah, when they lead me out, beyond the walls,
I shall look forth, across the rosy hills,
Knowing that far beyond their lilac rims
Thou wilt awake, in all thy beauty's pride,
Safe and beloved, already forgetful of me,
Whose lonely and smouldering life has broken
at last
Into this passionate flame of death. Mir—
Khan——”

WORTH WHILE

I ASKED of my desolate shipwrecked soul
 " Wouldst thou rather never have met
The one whom thou lovedst beyond control
 And whom thou adorest yet ? "

Back from the senses, the heart, the brain,
 Came the answer swiftly thrown,
" What matter the price ? we would pay it again,
 We have had, we have loved, we have known ! "

THE ORANGE GARDEN

(Translation from the Moorish by Walter Harris of Tangier)

I

I CANNOT find this Orange Garden fair :
The dim dishevelled grass is wet and chill.
Desolate, croaking frogs distress the air,
But birds, if ever birds come here, are still.

Even the oranges have lost their light
And droop forlorn beneath the sombre green.
A water-wheel creaks somewhere out of sight,
Grey mist and shadow veil the lonely scene.

And when I think I hear your coming feet
Rustle across the grass and violet leaves,
'Tis but the gardener, who fears to meet,
Among the gloom some fruit-attracted thieves.

II

Fair, ah, fair, is the sunny Orange Garden,
Secret and shady, scented and green.
Gold, red gold, are the oranges in clusters,
Fragrant and bright in their ripened sheen.

Even the croaking of the frogs is music,
Even the creak of the wheel is song,
Straight to my naked heart the wild birds' warble
Strikes in cadence, tremulously strong.

Now the old gardener passes discreetly,
Never upraising his guarded eyes,
For here in the violets, at rest, beside me,
Sweet and consenting, my Loved One lies !

YASIN KHAN

Ay, thou hast found thy kingdom, Yasin Khan,
Thy father's pomp and power are thine, at last.
No more the rugged roads of Khorasan,
The scanty food and tentage of the past !

Wouldst thou make war ? thy followers know no
fear,

Where shouldst thou lead them but to victory ?
Wouldst thou have love ? thy soft-eyed slaves
draw near

Eager to drain thy strength away from thee.

My thoughts drag backwards to forgotten days,
To scenes etched deeply on my heart by pain ;
The thirsty marches, ambuscades, and frays,
The hostile hills, the burnt and barren plain.

Hast thou forgotten how one night was spent,
Crouched in a camel's carcase by the road,
Along which Akbar's soldiers, scouting, went,
And he himself all unsuspecting, rode ?

Did we not waken one despairing dawn,
Attacked in front, cut off in rear by snow,
Till, like a tiger leaping on a fawn,
Half of the hill crashed down upon the foe ?

Once, as thou mourn'dst thy lifeless brother's fate,
The red tears falling from thy shattered wrist,
A spent Waziri, forceful still, in hate,
Covered thy heart, ten paces off,—and missed !

Ahi, men thrust a worn and dinted sword
Into a velvet-scabbarded repose;
The gilded pageants that salute thee Lord
Cover *one* sorrow-rusted heart, God knows.

Ah, to exchange this wealth of idle days
For one cold reckless night of Khorasan !
To crouch once more before the camp-fire blaze
That lit the lonely eyes of Yasin Khan.

To watch the starlight glitter on the snows,
The plain stretched round us like a waveless sea,
Waiting until thy weary lids should close
To slip my furs and spread them over thee.

How the wind howled about the lonely pass,
While the faint snow-shine of that plateaued
space
Lit, where it lay upon the frozen grass,
The mournful, tragic beauty of thy face.

Thou hast enough caressed the scented hair
Of these soft-breasted girls who waste thee so.
Hast thou not sons for every adult year ?
Let us arise, O Yasin Khan, and go !

Let us escape from out these prison bars
To gain the freedom of an open sky,
Thy soul and mine, alone beneath the stars,
Intriguing danger, as in days gone by.

Nay; there is no returning, Yasin Khan.
The white peaks ward the passes, as of yore,
The wind sweeps o'er the wastes of Khorasan;—
But thou and I go thitherward no more.

Close, ah, too close, the bitter knowledge clings,
We may not follow where my fancies yearn.
The years go hence, and wild and lovely things,
Their own, go with them, never to return.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Oh, come, Beloved, before my beauty fades,
Pity the sorrow of my loneliness.
I am a Rosebush that the Cypress shades,
No sunbeams find or lighten my distress.

Daily I watch the waning of my bloom.
Ah, piteous fading of a thing so fair !
While Fate, remorseless, weaving at her loom,
Twines furtive silver in my twisted hair.

This noon I watched a tremulous fading rose
Rise on the wind to court a butterfly.
“ One speck of pollen, ere my petals close,
Bring me one touch of love before I die ! ”

But the gay butterfly, who had the power
To grant, refused, flew far across the dell,
And, as he fertilised a younger flower,
The petals of the rose, defrauded, fell.

Such was my fate, thou hast not come to me,
Thine eyes are absent, and thy voice is mute,
Though I am slim, as this Papaya tree,
With breasts out-pointing, even as its fruit.

Beauty was mine, it brought me no caress,
My lips were red, yet there were none to taste,
I saw my youth consume in loneliness,
And all the fervour of my heart run waste.

While I still hoped that Thou would'st come to me,
I and the garden waited for their Lord.
Here He will rest, beneath this Champa tree;
Hence, all ye spike-set grasses from the sward !

In this cool rillet I shall bathe His feet,
Come, rounded pebbles, from a smoother shore.
This is the honey that His lips will eat,
Hasten, O bees, enhance the amber store !

Ripen, ye Custard Apples, round and fair,
Practise your songs, O Bulbuls, on the bough,
Surely some sweeter sweetness haunts the air;
Maybe His feet draw near us, even now !

Disperse, ye fireflies, clustered on the palm,
Love heeds no lamp, he welcomes moonless skies :
Soon shall ye find, O stars, serene and calm,
Your sparkling rivals in my lover's eyes !

Closely I wove my leafy Jasmin bowers,
Hoping to hide my pleasure and my shame,
Where the Lantana's indecisive flowers
Vary from palest rose to orange flame.

Ay, there were lovely hours, 'neath fern and palm,
Almost my aching longing I forgot.
White nights of silence, noons of golden calm,
All past, all wasted, since Thou camest not !

Night after night the Champa trees distilled
Their cruel sweetness on the careless air.

Noon after noon I watched the Bulbuls build,
And saw with hungry eyes the Sun-birds pair.

None came, and none will come; no use to wait,—
Youth's fragrance dies, its tender light dies
down.

I will arise, before it grows too late,
And seek the noisy brilliance of the town.

These many waiting years I longed for gold,
Now must I needs console me with alloy.
Before this beauty fades, this pulse grows cold,
I may not love, I will at least enjoy !

Farewell my Solitude of scented flowers,
Across whose glades the emerald parrots gleam,
Haunt of false hope, and home of wasted hours,
I am awake, at last,—Guard thou the dream !

SONG OF JASODA

HAD I been young I could have claimed to fold
thee

For many days against my eager breast;
But, as things are, how can I hope to hold thee
Once thou hast wakened from this fleeting rest ?

Clear shone the moonlight, so that thou couldst
find me,

Yet not so clear that thou couldst see my face,
Where in the shadow of the palms behind me
I waited for thy steps, for thy embrace.

What reck I now my morning life was lonely ?
For widowed feet the ways are always rough.
Though thou hast come to me at sunset only,
Still thou hast come, my Lord, it is enough.

Ah, mine no more, the glow of dawning beauty,
The fragrance and the dainty gloss of youth,
Worn by long years of solitude and duty,
I have no bloom to offer thee in truth.

Yet, since these eyes of mine have never wandered,
Still may they gleam with long forgotten light.
Since in no wanton way my youth was squandered,
Some sense of youth still clings to me to-night.

Thy lips are fresh as dew on budding roses,
The gold of dawn still lingers in thy hair,
While the abandonment of sleep discloses
How every attitude of youth is fair.

Thou art so pale, I hardly dare caress thee,
Too brown my fingers show against the white.
Ahi, the glory, that I should possess thee,
Ahi, the grief, but for a single night !

The tulip-tree has pallid golden flowers
That grow more rosy as their petals fade;
Such is the splendour of my evening hours
Whose time of youth was wasted in the shade.

I shall not wait to see to-morrow's morning,
Too bright the golden dawn for me,—too
bright,—
How could I bear thine eyes' unconscious scorning
Of what so pleased thee in the dimmer light?

It may be wine had brought some brief illusion,
Filling thy brain with rainbow fantasy,
Or youth, with moonlight, making sweet collusion,
Threw an alluring glamour over me.

Therefore I leave thee softly, to awaken
When the first sun-rays warm thy blue-veined
breast,
Smiling and all unknowing I have taken
The popped drink that brings me endless rest.

Thus would I have thee rise; thy fancy laden
With the vague sweetness of the bygone night,
Thinking of me as some consenting maiden,
Whose beauty blossomed first for thy delight.

While I, if any kindly visions hover
Around the silence of my last repose,
Shall dream of thee, my pale and radiant lover,
Who made my life so lovely at its close !

MIDDLE-AGE

THE sins of Youth are hardly sins,
So frank they are and free.
'Tis but when Middle-age begins
We need morality.

Ah, pause and weigh this bitter truth :
That Middle-age, grown cold,
No comprehension has of Youth,
No pity for the Old.

Youth, with his half-divine mistakes,
She never can forgive,
So much she hates his charm which makes
Worth while the life we live.

She scorns Old Age, whose tolerance,
And calm, well-balanced mind
(Knowing how crime is born of chance)
Can pardon all mankind.

Yet she, alas, has all the power
Of strength and place and gold,
Man's every act, through every hour,
Is by her laws controlled.

All things she grasps with sordid hands
And weighs in tarnished scales.
She neither feels, nor understands,
And yet her will prevails !

Cold-blooded vice and careful sin,
Gold-lust, blind selfishness,—
The shortest, cheapest way to win
Some, worse than cheap, success.

Such are her attributes and aims,
Yet meekly we obey,
While she to guide and order claims
All issues of the day.

You seek for honour, friendship, truth ?
Let Middle-age be banned !
Go, for warm-hearted acts, to Youth ;
To Age,—to understand !

MY DESIRE

FATE has given me many a gift
 To which men most aspire,
Lovely, precious and costly things,
 But not my heart's desire.

Many a man has a secret dream
 Of where his soul would be,
Mine is a low verandah'd house
 In a tope beside the sea.

Over the roof tall palms should wave,
 Swaying from side to side,
Every night we should fall asleep
 To the rhythm of the tide.

The dawn should be gay with song of birds,
 And the stir of fluttering wings.
Surely the joy of life is hid
 In simple and tender things !

At eve the waves would shimmer with gold
 In the rosy sunset rays,
Emerald velvet flats of rice
 Would rest the landward gaze.

A boat must rock at the laterite steps
In a reef-protected pool,
For we should sail through the starlit night
When the winds were calm and cool.

I am so tired of all this world,
Its folly and fret and care.
Find me a little scented home
Amongst thy loosened hair.

Give me a soft and secret place,
Against thine amber breast,
Where, hidden away from all mankind,
My soul may come to rest.

Many a man has a secret dream
Of where his life might be;
Mine is a lovely, lonely place
With sunshine and the sea.

FEROKE

THE rice-birds fly so white, so silver white,
The velvet rice-flats lie so emerald green,
My heart inhales, with sorrowful delight,
The sweet and poignant sadness of the scene.

The swollen tawny river seeks the sea,
Its hungry waters, never satisfied,
Beflecked with fallen log and torn-up tree,
Engulph the fisher-huts on either side.

The current brought a stranger yesterday,
And laid him on the sand beneath a palm,
His worn young face was partly torn away,
His eyes, that saw the world no more, were calm.

We could not close his eyelids, stiff with blood,—
But, oh, my brother, I had changed with thee,
For I am still tormented in the flood,
Whilst thou hast done thy work, and reached
the sea.

UNANSWERED

SOMETHING compels me, somewhere. Yet I see
No clear command in Life's long mystery.

Oft have I flung myself beside my horse,
To drink the water from the roadside mire,
And felt the liquid through my being course,
Stilling the anguish of my thirst's desire.

A simple want; so easily allayed;
After the burning march; water and shade.

Also I lay against the loved one's heart
Finding fulfilment in that resting-place,
Feeling my longing, quenched was but a part
Of Nature's ceaseless striving for the race.

But now, I know not what they would with me;
Matter or Force or God, if Gods there be.

I wait; I question; Nature heeds me not.
She does but urge in answer to my prayer,
"Arise and do!" Alas, she adds not what,
"Arise and go!" Alas, she says not where!

THE MASTERS

OH, Masters, you who rule the world,
Will you not wait with me awhile,
When swords are sheathed and sails are furled,
And all the fields with harvest smile ?
I would not waste your time for long,
I ask you but, when you are tired,
To read how by the weak, the strong
Are weighed and worshipped and desired.

When weary of the Mart, the Loom,
The Withering-house, the Riffle-blocks,
The Barrack-square, the Engine-room,
The pick-axe, ringing on the rocks,—
When tents are pitched and work is done,
While restful twilight broods above,
By fresh-lit lamp, or dying sun,
See in my songs how women love.

We shared your lonely watch by night,
We knew you faithful at the helm,
Our thoughts went with you through the fight
That saved a soul,—or wrecked a realm,
Ah, how our hearts leapt forth to you,
In pride and joy, when you prevailed,
And when you died, serene and true :
—We wept in silence, when you failed !

Oh, brain, that did not gain the gold !

Oh, arm, that could not wield the sword,

Here is the love, that is not sold,

Here are the hearts to hail you Lord !

You played and lost the game ? What then ?

The rules are harsh and hard we know,

You, still, Oh, brothers, are the men

Whom we in secret reverence so.

Your work was waste ? Maybe your share

Lay in the hour you laughed and kissed ;

Who knows but what your son shall wear

The laurels that his father missed ?

Ay, you who win, and you who lose,

Whether you triumph,—or despair,—

When your returning footsteps choose

The homeward track, our love is there.

For, since the world is ordered thus,

To you the fame, the stress, the sword,

We can but wait, until to us

You give yourselves, for our reward.

To Whaler's deck and Coral beach,

To lonely Ranch and Frontier-Fort,

Beyond the narrow bounds of speech

I lay the cable of my thought.

I fain would send my thanks to you,

(Though who am I, to give you praise ?)

Since what you are, and work you do,

Are lessons for our easier ways.

'Neath alien stars your camp-fires glow,
I know you not,—your tents are far.
My hope is but in song to show,
How honoured and how dear you are.

THE BRIDE

BEAT on the Tom-toms, and scatter the flowers,
Jasmin, Hibiscus, vermillion and white,
This is the day, and the Hour of Hours,
Bring forth the Bride for her Lover's delight.
Maidens no more as a maiden shall claim her,
Near, in his Mystery, draweth Desire.
Who, if she waver a moment, shall blame her ?
She is a flower, and love is a fire.

Choti Tinchaurya syani hogayi ! *

Give her the anklets, the rings and the necklace,
Darken her eyelids with delicate Art,
Heighten the beauty, so youthful and fleckless,
By the Gods favoured, oh, Bridegroom thou art !
Twine in thy fingers her fingers so slender,
Circle together the Mystical Fire,
Bridegroom,—a whisper,—be gentle and tender,
Choti Tinchaurya knows not desire.

Abhi Tinchaurya syani hogayi !

Bring forth the silks and the veil that shall cover
Beauty, till yesterday, careless and wild,
Red are her lips for the kiss of a lover,
Ripe are her breasts for the lips of a child.

* *Anglicè* : Little Tinchaurya has grown up.

Centre and Shrine of Mysterious Power,
Chalice of Pleasure and Rose of Delight,
Shyly aware of the swift-coming hour,
Waiting the shade and the silence of night,
Choti Tinchaurya syani hogayi !

Still must the Bridegroom his longing dissemble,
Longing to loosen the silk-woven cord,
Ah, how his fingers will flutter and tremble,
Fingers well skilled with the bridle and sword.
Thine is his valour, oh, Bride, and his beauty,
Thine to possess and re-issue again,
Such is thy tender and passionate duty,
Licit thy pleasure and honoured thy pain.
Choti Tinchaurya syani hogayi !

Choti Tinchaurya, lovely and tender,
Still all unbroken to sorrow and strife.
Come to the Bridegroom who, silk-clad and slender,
Brings thee the Honour and Burden of Life.
Bidding farewell to thy light-hearted playtime,
Worship thy Lover with fear and delight,
Art thou not ever, though slave of his daytime,
Choti Tinchaurya, queen of his night ?
Choti Tinchaurya syani hogayi !

AMONG THE RICE FIELDS

SHE was fair as a Passion-flower,
 (But little of love he knew.)

Her lucent eyes were like amber wine,
 And her eyelids stained with blue.

He called them the Gates of Fair Desire,
 And the Lakes where Beauty lay,
But I looked into them once, and saw
 The eyes of Beasts of Prey.

He praised her teeth, that were small and white
 As lilies upon his lawn,
While I remembered a tiger's fangs
 That met in a speckled fawn.

She had her way; a lover the more,
 And I had a friend the less.
For long there was nothing to do but wait
 And suffer his happiness.

But now I shall choose the sharpest Kriss
 And nestle it in her breast,
For dead, he is drifting down to sea,
 And his own hand wrought his rest.

WINGS

WAS it worth while to forego our wings
To gain these dextrous hands ?
Truly they fashion us wonderful things
As the fancy of man demands.

But—to fly ! to sail through the lucid air
From crest to violet crest
Of these great grey mountains, quartz-veined and
bare,
Where the white clouds gather and rest.

Even to flutter from flower to flower,—
To skim the tops of the trees,—
In the roseate light of a sun-setting hour
To drift on a sea-going breeze.

Ay, the hands have marvellous skill
To create us curious things,—
Baubles, playthings, weapons to kill,—
But—I would we had chosen wings !

KHRISTNA AND HIS FLUTE

(Translation by Moolchand)

BE still, my heart, and listen,
For sweet and yet acute
I hear the wistful music
Of Khristna and his flute.
Across the cool, blue evenings,
Throughout the burning days,
Persuasive and beguiling,
He plays and plays and plays.

Ah, none may hear such music
Resistant to its charms,
The household work grows weary,
And cold the husband's arms.
I must arise and follow,
To seek, in vain pursuit,
The blueness and the distance,
The sweetness of that flute.

In linked and liquid sequence,
The plaintive notes dissolve
Divinely tender secrets
That none but he can solve.

O Khristna, I am coming,
I can no more delay.
“ My heart has flown to join thee,”
How shall my footsteps stay ?

Beloved, such thoughts have peril;
The wish is in my mind
That I had fired the jungle,
And left no leaf behind,—
Burnt all bamboos to ashes,
And made their music mute,—
To save thee from the magic
Of Khristna and his flute.

“ SURFACE RIGHTS ”

DRIFTING, drifting down the River,
Tawny current and foam-flecked tide,
Sorrowful songs of lonely boatmen,
Mournful forests on either side.

Mine are the outcrops' glittering blocks,
The quartz where the rich pyrites gleam,
The golden treasure of unhewn rocks
And the loose gold in the stream.

But,—the dim vast forests along the shore,
That whisper wonderful things o' nights,—
These are things that I value more,
My beautiful “ surface rights.”

Drifting, drifting down the River,—
Stars a-tremble about the sky—
Ah, my lover, my heart is breaking,
Breaking, breaking, I know not why.

Why is Love such a sorrowful thing ?
This I never could understand ;
Pain and passion are linked together,
Ever I find them hand in hand.

Loose thy hair in its soft profusion,
 Let thy lashes caress thy cheek,—
 These are the things that express thy spirit,
 What is the need to explain or speak?

Drifting, drifting along the River,
 Under the light of a wan low moon,
 Steady, the paddles; Boatmen, steady,—
 Why should we reach the sea so soon?

See where the low spit cuts the water,
 What is that misty wavering light?
 Only the pale datura flowers
 Blossoming through the silent night.

What is the fragrance in thy tresses?
 'Tis the scent of the champa's breath;
 The meaning of champa bloom is passion—
 And of datura—death!

Sweet are thy ways and thy strange caresses
 That sear as flame, and exult as wine.
 But I care only for that wild moment
 When my soul arises and reaches thine.

Wistful voices of wild birds calling—
 Far, faint lightning towards the West,—
 Twinkling lights of a Tyah homestead,—
 Ruddy glow on a girl's bare breast—

Drifting boats on a mournful River,
 Shifting thoughts in a dreaming mind,—
 We two, seeking the Sea, together,—
 When we reach it,—what shall we find?

I SHALL FORGET

ALTHOUGH my life, which thou hast scarred and shaken,

Retains awhile some influence of thee,
As shells, by faithless waves, long since forsaken,
Still murmur with the music of the Sea,

I shall forget. Not thine the haunting beauty,
Which, once beheld, for ever holds the heart,
Or, if resigned from stress of Fate or Duty,
Takes part of life away :—the dearer part.

I gave thee love; thou gavest but Desire.
Ah, the delusion of that summer night !
Thy soul vibrated at the rate of Fire;
Mine, with the rhythm of the waves of Light.

It is my love for thee that I regret,
Not thee, thyself, and hence,—I shall forget !





